

EXTENSION DODGE COUNTY MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

JUNE 2025

AGRICULTURE - CROPS



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.

Educator: Will Fulwider

UW Madison has recommendations for nitrogen crediting for manure and for single species legumes like red clover following or interseeded into wheat prior to corn. However, as farmer concerns for soil health and nutrient loss during fallow periods has spread, farmers are increasingly adopting cover crop mixes as a way of reaping the benefits from grasses, legumes, brassicas, and forbs, while minimizing the disadvantages of each. There is little to no systematic, on-farm research in Wisconsin on the yield effect from these multi-species mixes.

- This research seeks to understand not only how the composition of these mixes affects the nitrogen crediting to the following corn crop, but also the effect that these mixes have on the soil health metrics that farmers are planting them for. The research team collaborated with three farmers in Dodge County and three in Dane, to design the research plots and the farmers planted the first year of the research in August 2023. Cover crop and non-cover crop controls were evaluated for baseline measurements of soil health and nitrogen, while in season measurements of nitrogen provided a snapshot of the fate of the nitrogen from the cover crops. Yield collected at the end of the year from the plots will allow the research team to construct response curves to estimate the nitrogen credit derived from the cover crop mixes. Presentations at various farmer conferences and field days as well as an Extension fact sheet on the research will help to the results of the research reach farmers.

A newsletter for farmers, managers, employees and agribusiness professionals in collaboration with the Eastern Wisconsin Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative that informs the reader of upcoming UW Madison Division of Extension programs, provides key crop and dairy management updates and includes timely production articles.

- A partnership between the Eastern Wisconsin Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative and Extension results in a newsletter mailed to 300 current dairy producers in Eastern Wisconsin. The newsletter pairs results from the cooperative's milk testing and allows local Extension educators to share key activities, events and articles that focus on improving management related to crops and dairy cattle. The partnership allows Extension educators to determine what resources are most important to producers at the times the newsletter is published, which in turn provides research based solutions to growers and farmers when it makes sense for their farm. We collaborate with DHIC staff to ensure timely delivery of the content. The newsletter is direct mailed to approximately 300 dairy producers every two months, and the targeted information drives dairy producers to engage with Extension programs and educators.

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A regional agriculture newsletter for Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Washington and Ozaukee county agriculture producers, industry representatives and agency staff that provides timely crop production updates, dairy and farm management resources and upcoming agriculture events. The goal is to create awareness of Extension programming and research in the region and maintain a connection between UW and the ag community.

- Crop, dairy and livestock producers make key management decisions every day based on challenges related to markets, weather and farm goals. It is important for them to have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to help them choose production methods that help them achieve their goals. As a result, the Regional Ag Updates newsletter is prepared and e-mailed to approximately 900 ag producers, agency staff and agribusiness consultants that support farmers. In the winter months, the newsletter is sent monthly, with issues every two weeks during the crop production months. This newsletter shares field trial opportunities, timely management updates and tools to support production decisions, along with UW Extension and partner event opportunities. This newsletter consistently has a 40% open rate and one recipient shared the importance of having upcoming local and statewide events listed in one place. It further has become a great partnership tool between Extension and local producer-led watershed groups, land and water departments and state agencies. This effort creates a greater awareness of resources available to support their farm production goals.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Educator: Patricia Malone

Small rural communities like Dodgeville and Columbus are in need of identifying ways to attract visitors, new families, and new businesses. The old saying... you never get a second chance to make a first impression. As a county based CDI educator, it's important to help the communities we serve access the programming Extension has to offer. Extension worked on strategic planning with the Dodgeville Area Chamber of Commerce in 2024, and this program was identified as something Dodgeville should consider doing. The catalyst for this effort was Dodge County CDI Extension Educator, reaching out looking for a community to pair with Columbus to participate in the First Impressions program. The Dodge and Iowa county CDI educators reached out to state specialist Todd Barman to discuss the First Impressions program and request his assistance in educating our community about the program and benefits. Dodgeville is at the intersection of many major roads/highways, and it was identified that we need to do a better job of making any "impression" to those who make their way to and through Dodgeville. This work will help Columbus and Dodgeville identify aspects of their community that are attractive to visitors as well as identify aspects of their community that could be improved upon to create a better first impression. Results will be used to inform community development.

Housing survey completed and reviewed. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how local officials view housing issues in their communities to provide more effective housing education. The goal is to send it out in June.

A series of Community Economic Development Conversations are being planned for June. These conversations will target elected and appointed officials to gather information on economic development issues faced in Dodge County.

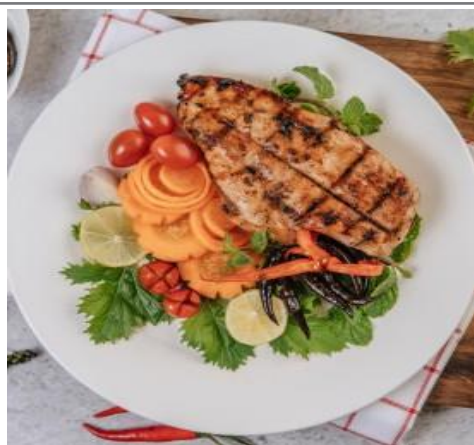
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FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHY EATING, AND HEALTHY LIVING



FoodWise advances healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for families with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels. *FoodWise* reaches individuals and families through local community partners by providing nutrition classes in-person and virtually, indirect education (newsletters, etc.), and social media/marketing. *FoodWise* is an obesity prevention program that addresses policy, system and environmental changes through local and state public health efforts. *FoodWise* is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Educator: Kimberly Lafler

Educator Kimberly Lafler partnered with SAGES Elementary physical education teacher to provide an education series for first, third and fifth grade students. In conjunction with physical education class students learned about the importance of eating the five food groups, food safety and being physically active. Interactive games allowed students to learn and practice the key lesson concepts taught while also learning the importance of and being physically active. This effort was designed to help students learn the importance of making healthy choices in what they eat and in what they do. This positive experience will in turn help with healthy choices in the future.

Additionally a series of educational lessons was provided for students at Lincoln Elementary third grade classrooms. Interactive lessons were designed to encourage students to practice key lesson concepts of eating five food groups, being physically active and practicing food safety. Samples of whole grains, fruits and a plant protein were also included as part of the series allowing students to explore and experience a new or different food in a safe environment. This can encourage students to continue to explore and experience new foods as well as encourage students to start making healthy choices which in turn can help students continue to make healthy choices as they grow.

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



*The Extension Institute of **Human Development & Relationships** provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.*

Educator: Pattie Carroll

Planning a parent workshop for families of incoming kindergarteners in collaboration with local schools and early childhood educators. The goal is to equip parents with strategies to support their child's transition to kindergarten, so that children enter school confident, prepared, and ready to thrive academically and socially. By equipping families with tools and strategies to support early learning and emotional readiness, we can improve school outcomes and close readiness gaps before they widen. In response to the growing need for early school readiness, Carroll is co-creating a parent workshop in collaboration with local schools and early childhood partners. This interactive session will provide families with practical tools, developmental insights, and hands-on strategies to support their child's transition to kindergarten. By focusing on social-emotional development, and home-to-school connections, the workshop will empower parents to become confident advocates and active participants in their child's educational journey—laying the foundation for long-term academic and social success.

All families experience transitions in life, and many will experience divorce, separation, or changes in the custody of their children. In the United States nearly half of all marriages will end in divorce and divorced parenthood is common. Divorce and separation can have profound consequences for children, parents, and families, although with adequate support negative outcomes in childhood and adolescence can be mitigated. The quality of parenting and parental conflict are key drivers of children's well-being and can be boosted by brief interventions that focus on emotional support for parents and caregivers. Resilient Co-Parenting is a monthly one-hour series that provides parents and caregivers with valuable skills for improving effective communication, reducing family conflict, strengthening co-parenting relationships, and positively supporting children. Carroll offers the series virtually for parents and caregivers in Dodge county. As a result of the Resilient Co-Parenting class series, most parents and caregivers who respond to our survey report learning techniques that can help make their family interactions more positive. The impact of the Resilient Co-Parenting program is important because changes in family structure can have profound impacts on child and parent well-being, findings well documented by research. Parents who receive and engage with parenting classes during family structure changes can learn valuable and effective communication and parenting skills that act as major buffers from the deleterious effects of instability.

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



***Positive Youth Development** prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.*

Educator: Marie Witzel

A series of meetings, work-dates, and counselor interviews and training for the purpose of planning a 4-H camp for youth from Columbia, Dodge, and Sauk counties. The camp goal is bringing youth together to try new activities, make new friends, and experience nature and time away from home in a safe setting.

- 4-H summer camp is a life-changing experience for youth because it teaches resilience, independence, and provides youth with opportunities to learn, succeed, and be proud of themselves as they accomplish things they didn't feel capable of doing. The 4-H educators from Columbia, Dodge, and Sauk meet regularly to interview camp counselors, develop training materials, host a counselor training day, create supply lists, write the camp schedule, host orientation zooms with participants and families, meet with the camp site directors, provide training to the adult volunteers, and provide support to the youth as they develop lesson plans for the educational sessions offered during camp. Youth participants create new and lasting friendships and memories, develop positive and supportive relationships with adults, gain leadership skills as they challenge themselves, and they learn how to be kind and thoughtful people as they work and play with their peers.